United Nations A/C.3/57/SR.18

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Official Records

Distr.: General
10 February 2004
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 14 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)
later: Mr. Morikawa (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Japan)

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02-63652 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 43: Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

Agenda item 105: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Abulgasim** (Sudan) said that, since the World Summit for Children, the Government and Sudanese civil society organizations had been according high priority to children's rights. The success of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the holding of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly bore testimony to the great importance of children to the international community, as noted in the document entitled "A world fit for children" (A/S-27/19/Rev.1). The Sudan hoped that implementation of the Plan of Action contained therein would help in achieving the well-being of children and in promoting their rights, and that a follow-up report on the issue would be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session. International cooperation was paramount, since the persistence of the existing situation widened the gap between rich and poor countries and globalization resulted in the marginalization of developing countries, especially the least developed. To that must be added the burden of debt; meanwhile, malnutrition was on the increase and, in Africa in particular, lethal epidemics — such as malaria or human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) — were spreading, as were conflicts.

2. The Sudan had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had subsequently launched a national programme of work focused on education, children's health and drinking water supply, and had adopted various legislative texts to benefit children; a Supreme Council for Children had also been established. The State also attached great importance to peace as a means of halting emigration and population displacement.

3. The Sudan had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. However, the continuation of war as a result of the obstinate refusal of the rebel movement to respond to the Government's appeals was the main factor hampering implementation of programmes to benefit children. The international community must intensify its efforts to halt the rebellion, achieve an unconditional ceasefire and end the suffering of women and children. In that connection, it should be recalled that, in his report on protection of children affected by armed conflict (A/57/402), the Secretary-General had stressed the need for armed groups to provide for the protection of children and to comply with the Convention and its Optional Protocols, as well as international humanitarian law. The Sudan was very concerned by the issue of children's rights and urged a settlement of the current conflict, which had repercussions on children at all levels.

4. Trafficking in children was another serious phenomenon which the international community must combat in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

5. The world was a witness to the plight of the Palestinian children and the human tragedy resulting from the Israeli invasion, which had already caused thousands of deaths and injuries and serious physical and psychological trauma. There was a need to provide assistance to Palestinian children and implement the Security Council resolutions to ensure the protection of the civilian population in Palestine, especially the women and children.

6. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) recalled the heartening observations made at the special session of the General Assembly on children, which proved the effectiveness of joint action, but said that much remained to be done. The situation of child victims of armed conflict and the sex trade was alarming, and was further exacerbated by political conflict, poverty, criminal networks and improved communications.

7. The international community must cooperate to improve the status of children and punish those who brutalized them. His Government would shortly be depositing the instruments of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The United States appreciated the efforts made by the Secretary-General and various parts of the United Nations system, as well as by non-governmental organizations, to promote the demobilization and social reintegration of children. He trusted that the provisions of the second Optional Protocol, for their part, would help to strengthen assistance to child victims of

pornography and prostitution. In that connection, the Government of the United States each year contributed more than $20 million towards programmes assisting child victims, and would continue to accord them high priority.

8. The two Optional Protocols were critical, and he urged their widest possible ratification by the international community; it was to be hoped that the common objective, namely elimination of violence against children, would be achieved by means of cooperation.

9. **Mr. Bázel** (Afghanistan), speaking on agenda item 105, said that the Transitional Government of Afghanistan was determined to enable children to escape the plight to which they had been subjected for 23 years. A national reconstruction programme had been adopted to that end, with an emphasis on restoring social services and providing education for women and children.

10. Further, convinced that investment in children was worthwhile, the Government of Afghanistan had recently deposited the instruments of accession to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

11. The Government recognized that children should be raised according to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations — peace, dignity, tolerance and equality. In that connection, the Minister of Education had clearly stated that school curricula would be revised with a view to removing any incitement to violence and intolerance.

12. However, owing to a scarcity of domestic resources, the Government was unable to attain its goals or resolve the considerable difficulties the country was experiencing. Afghanistan had thus made several appeals to the international community to help it create a world fit for children, taking account of their best interests.

13. The Government of Afghanistan thanked the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its health and education programme for Afghan children. Thanks to UNICEF assistance to Kabul, more than three million children had been enrolled in school in 2002 (45 per cent girls, compared to only 4 per cent elsewhere in Afghanistan).

14. Lastly, he wished to reiterate the joint appeal made with UNICEF to the international community to provide funding for the children's plan of action adopted by the Fund and, in the interests of national and regional peace and stability, to implement the programme for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

15. **Mr. Gánsukh** (Mongolia) said that his delegation welcomed the enormous efforts made by Member States, non-governmental organizations and international organizations over the past year which had resulted, inter alia, in the convening of the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the special session of the General Assembly on children. The entry into force of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the growing number of countries acceding to or ratifying them were also welcome.

16. Mongolia attached great importance to the document entitled "A world fit for children" (A/S-27/19/Rev.1). The international community must continue to build on the momentum it had achieved in promoting and protecting the rights of children. To ensure that commitments made did not remain a dead letter, Member States should prepare and implement concrete action plans. In that connection, Mongolia wished to inform the Committee that it had held a National Children's Forum in 2001, at which implementation of the national action programme for children had been reviewed and a second programme for the period 2002-2010 had been formulated.

17. Mongolia placed emphasis on education quality; in that connection, he stressed the importance of the United Nations Literacy Decade through which the international community reaffirmed its commitment to the goal of education for all.

18. Building a better world for future generations required genuine partnership between all stakeholders. Mongolia thus welcomed the adoption by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of its general comment on "The role of national human rights institutions in promoting and protecting children's rights", as well as its recommendations addressed to States Parties and non-State actors.

19. It was important that children should participate actively in the initiatives that would shape their future. Accordingly, Mongolia had recently organized a series of conferences to raise children's and adolescents' awareness nationwide of the conclusions and programmes of action resulting from the world

summits and conferences held in the 1990s, and to encourage their greater participation in follow-up activities taking place within the framework of the National Programme for Children.

20. The strengthening of the legal framework was of paramount importance for the promotion and protection of children's rights. Mongolia was party to over 30 international human rights treaties; in 2001, it had signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. National legislation was largely being revised to take account of developments in the country and Mongolia's obligations under treaties, as in the case of the law on the protection of children's rights which accorded special attention to children in difficult circumstances.

21. Despite the progress made and initiatives taken by the Government to improve the situation of children in all areas, for example by adopting specific measures in children's interests and establishing a social development programme, Mongolia was in a transitional period and continued to face serious difficulties.

22. Lastly, he wished to reaffirm that his Government would make every effort to achieve the goals laid out in the World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, including through active participation in regional and international programmes and cooperation with other Member States, United Nations bodies and international and national non-governmental organizations.

23. **Ms. Groux** (Switzerland) said that, although the Programme of Action adopted at the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children covered many issues daily affecting the world's children, including those related to education, health, economic and sexual exploitation and armed conflict, it was no substitute for implementation of the relevant international obligations, especially given that some of the compromises reached in the outcome documents of the special session did not go as far as existing international norms.

24. The widespread violence of various types committed by States, non-State actors, society and the family was well known, and the study on violence against children that the General Assembly, at its fifty-sixth session, had requested of the Secretary-General should be initiated as soon as possible. That study would also facilitate preparation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of a general comment on the relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Switzerland wished in that connection to reiterate its support for the Committee on the Rights of the Child, for whose work and initiatives it had the highest regard.

25. The issue of children in armed conflict was of crucial importance to Switzerland, concerned as it was to promote human safety in all circumstances. The Government had ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and that key instrument had entered into force in early 2002; it welcomed the work of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, including his efforts to integrate children's rights in all United Nations activities, thus facilitating prevention, recovery and social reintegration activities. Similarly, the work done by UNICEF in the field helped to achieve implementation of the Optional Protocol and provided vital support to child victims of armed conflict.

26. The General Assembly must decide on the future mandate of the Special Representative, revising it in light of results obtained; issues continuing to affect children in armed conflict; and recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on the reform of the Organization.

27. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba) said that commitments made at the World Summit for Children and the special session of the General Assembly on children in the interests of young people still seemed abstract while millions of children throughout the world lacked access to quality basic education, lived in extreme poverty or died from curable diseases at an early age, while the HIV/AIDS pandemic continued to spread, while infant mortality remained extremely high in some parts of the world, and while forced prostitution affected two million girls. Nor were children spared the phenomena of trafficking and sale of organs, continuing wars and armed conflict, or emerging conflicts that could lead to serious consequences for everyone, more particularly for children.

28. There was a sharp contrast between reality and the idyllic world portrayed by advocates of neo-liberal globalization. For all children to exercise their rights and enjoy well-being, it was necessary to change the current economic order which benefited only 20 per

cent of the world's population and excluded the remaining 80 per cent. Child-related goals would not be attained by the developing countries while official development assistance — currently accounting for only 0.22 per cent of industrialized countries' GDP — continued to decrease, despite the international cooperation pledges made by those countries, while developing countries were forced to devote $340 billion a year to debt-servicing, while trade barriers to third world products — or to the acquisition by those countries of the advanced technology essential to their development — persisted or were multiplied, and while investment flows to developing countries were drying up.

29. Alongside compliance with international commitments, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (signed and ratified by Cuba) and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (which Cuba had signed and intended to ratify) were the key to any resolution of child-related issues. The resolution and prevention of armed conflict — the causes of which must be identified — were also of paramount importance in establishing a climate of peace in the world, so vital to fulfilling children's full potential. Cuba wished to pay a tribute to the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; it should be recalled that the Special Representative's mandate was determined by the General Assembly, whose role in dealing with the issue was constantly diminishing compared with that of the Security Council. It would thus be appropriate to consider ways in which the General Assembly or Economic and Social Council could strengthen their action on behalf of children in armed conflicts, in parallel to the activities being carried out by the other competent bodies.

30. Cuba's child policy, based on the principles of equal opportunities and social justice, had been followed through despite the four decades of economic warfare and blockade imposed by the Government of the United States of America, which had brought considerable health consequences. It should, however, be noted that in Cuba: children had access to free education; infant mortality was 6.2 per 1,000 live births; 100 per cent of children were protected against 13 curable diseases; and 99 per cent of births took place in a hospital environment.

31. *Mr. Morikawa (Japan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

32. **Mr. Zeidan** (Lebanon), speaking on agenda item 105, said that his country, which had signed or ratified the key international instruments relating to children's rights (including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour), accorded great importance to the item.

33. Lebanon had achieved considerable progress in the area of child health. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, having examined Lebanon's second periodic report (CRC/C/15/Add.169), had welcomed the legislative reforms undertaken in Lebanon, in particular the adoption of a law on free and compulsory education up to the age of 12 and stricter legislation on child labour. The Committee had also acknowledged that the consequences of the civil war, political instability and economic difficulties had impeded implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; it had urged Lebanon to strengthen its efforts to provide for the adequate psychosocial recovery and social reintegration of victims of violence and armed conflict. With regard to the issue of landmines, he wished to draw attention to the lifelong physical and psychological damage endured by children injured by landmines; in southern Lebanon, a large number of such devices had been left behind by the Israelis.

34. Particularly in so many of the world's poor families, where children must work as soon as they were old enough to be useful, one of the most widely held values that children were taught to adopt was the right assumed by adults to do what they wanted with their children. If children everywhere were regarded as persons in their own right and not as objects, there would be no need to devote a separate agenda item to the promotion and protection of children's rights.

35. He recalled the incident in Qana, Lebanon, of 18 August 1996, when the Israeli army had shelled a UNIFIL camp, killing 102 people, mostly women and children. Children on both sides of every conflict were the first victims of adults' mindless wars. The Palestinian children, who had no other means of resisting the occupiers but to throw stones, were a case in point.

36. He had studied various United Nations reports on the situation of Palestinian children and wondered

whether adults could remain indifferent to their plight and not question the world and the message being passed on to children, the future leaders of humanity; as was well known, there was a risk that children growing up in a cruel world would use politics merely as a tool for revenge, as their elders had.

37. **Mr. Niculescu** (Romania), welcoming the positive outcome of the special session on children, said that his Government attached great importance to the promotion and protection of children's rights. Romania, like the rest of the international community, must ensure that the commitments made in the final document were translated into concrete action at the national level.

38. In Romania, reform of the regulatory and institutional framework for the protection and development of children was under way at both the national and local levels. Since the objective was to ensure that every child in need benefited from a structure resembling as closely as possible a normal family environment, the Romanian authorities had opted to close a number of orphanages and replace them with alternative services, such as family-type homes, with the support of various partners such as the European Union, UNICEF and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The authorities had also adopted measures to prevent abandonment of children. Romania would also continue to focus its child policy on the reintegration of street children, the social and professional integration of young people from orphanages after they attained their majority, and the training of staff specializing in child protection.

39. At the regulatory level, to ensure that the child's best interest was taken into account, the Government had recently submitted a series of bills to parliament, including some on child protection and adoption, and had appointed a children's rights ombudsman. In partnership with the International Organization for Migration and civil society, a plan of action against trafficking in human beings, particularly in children, had also been developed, and existing legislation was to be complemented by a witness protection act.

40. In the field of education, measures had been devised to guarantee the access of all children to education, to enhance teaching quality and to encourage school attendance.

41. Lastly, Romania had ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and urged those countries that had not already done so to accede to those crucial instruments for the protection of children's rights.

42. **Mr. Al-Redi** (Saudi Arabia) said that protection of the rights of the child — for which parents, society and the State bore responsibility — was still far from being a reality. Relations between children and their parents, and between children and society, should be based not on mutual interest but on faith, reason, charity and compassion. One of a child's primary rights was to be born in legitimate wedlock to a family capable of teaching the concepts of right and wrong. Under the Shariah, a child's rights must be protected from conception, since life was a gift of God, to be protected at all costs. Saudi Arabia thus condemned abortion, which should not be used as a means of family planning, but viewed only as a last resort, if the mother's life was in danger.

43. With regard to the health and rights of pregnant women, Saudi Arabia's Labour Code, in articles 164 to 171, provided for maternity leave for one month prior to and six months after delivery. It also provided for supplementary leave for breastfeeding. The costs incurred were the responsibility of the employer, who could not dismiss a woman on maternity leave. Moreover, in the event of the father's death before delivery, the estate was not apportioned until after the birth, in order to safeguard the mother's mental health and ensure that the newborn received its share.

44. Saudi Arabian governmental institutions played an important role in promoting children's basic rights, particularly in the fields of education, health, leisure and skills development. Many national development projects included programmes with a focus on children, coordinated by a national children's committee. For the protection of orphans and children with special needs, Saudi Arabia encouraged their placement in foster families. Saudi Arabia was also concerned with the physical education and cultural development of children, including through cultural centres. Social counselling programmes and rehabilitation centres for minors had also been established. In addition, education for all children, including in specialized institutions, was free of charge and primary education was compulsory.

45. The international community must cooperate, while respecting the sovereignty of States, as well as national, historical, cultural and religious differences. He also wished to urge the international community, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to protect the rights of children in the occupied Palestinian territory who faced massacre, destruction and deprivation.

46. **Mr. Mahendran** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government of Sri Lanka had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, as well as its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, in 2000. It was also a signatory of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and had signed and ratified International Labour Organization conventions and protocols concerning child labour.

47. At the national level, successive Governments had made the rights of the child a key priority, especially in the areas of poverty, education, health, the environment and armed conflict. Measures that had been adopted included the formulation of a Children's Charter and national plan of action, the establishment of mechanisms to monitor implementation of children's rights, the amendment of the Act on sexual exploitation of children, ill-treatment and trafficking, as well as the introduction of child-friendly court procedures. Initiatives to raise awareness of children's views and protect their right to freedom of expression and participation were also welcome developments.

48. Several decades of government commitment to promote health and education had led to declines in infant and maternal mortality rates, an increase in literacy and school enrolment rates for boys and girls alike, a low birth rate and the almost complete elimination of immunizable diseases (the last case of poliomyelitis having been reported in 1993). To ensure that no child was left behind, health care, textbooks, uniforms and other school supplies were provided free of charge. Education, including at university level, was also free.

49. Sri Lanka had managed to make social investments a priority that did not wait for economic growth and, according to a report published in 1997, was one of 10 countries in the world to have achieved the most significant progress within one generation.

50. One of Sri Lanka's primary concerns was to protect children from the impact of armed conflict. The cessation of hostilities, through the signature of a ceasefire agreement in February 2002, had enabled the Government of Sri Lanka to focus more attention on children in war-ravaged regions. Jointly with international agencies such as UNICEF and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Sri Lanka had always opposed the Tamil Tigers' use of children in their armed forces.

51. In Sri Lanka, as in many developing countries, it was not so much lack of commitment as poverty and inadequate resources that impeded the realization of children's rights. The international community must thus make poverty eradication a top priority. No effort must be spared to strengthen economic cooperation, improve trade terms and ensure universal access to technological advancements, including in the medical field.

52. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that during the celebration of World Youth Day in Toronto, Canada, in July 2002, His Holiness Pope John Paul II had stressed that young people represented hope. That hope had also characterized the festivities marking the independence of Timor-Leste after years of isolation, oppression, poverty and terror that had been attended by large numbers of young people.

53. In its statement at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Holy See had called attention to the situation of all those who did not have access to basic services, including the unemployed, underemployed and sick — all those who had little hope for a brighter future.

54. It was all too easy to pledge to uphold the commitments made at the special session of the General Assembly on children; it was another matter to translate words into action. For centuries, the Catholic Church had been active in promoting and protecting the rights of children and in caring for their physical and spiritual well-being; it was determined to continue that mission. One of its agencies, the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood, had been leading the way for more than 150 years, providing assistance to young people without discrimination on grounds of race, culture or religion. Its secretary-general had been a member of the delegation of the Holy See at the special session and had listened intently to the various interventions,

with a view to helping the Holy See to better meet the needs of the world's children.

55. Children were the future of humanity; it was necessary to protect and promote their rights and respond to their needs.

56. **Mr. Ahmad** (Iraq) expressed regret that efforts made and progress achieved at the international level had been inadequate to end violations of the rights of children, who continued to be the victims of poverty, conflicts, economic crises, sickness and trafficking.

57. At the national level, the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq had had a disastrous impact on children, society's most vulnerable group. Since 1968, Iraq had paid special attention to protecting and strengthening the rights of children. Education was free and compulsory; national programmes accorded special importance to children, as UNICEF had acknowledged. Health care was free of charge; until 1990 the care provided had been of excellent quality. Thereafter, however, the imposition of economic sanctions and successive attacks had led to an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe with millions of Iraqi child victims. Children, women and the elderly — society's most vulnerable groups — were deprived of their basic rights to a balanced diet, health care and decent living conditions. The mortality rate for infants under five years of age was 9,000 children per month, representing one child every five minutes.

58. He wondered how Iraq, in such circumstances, could be expected to implement the recommendations of international conferences and meetings devoted to children, including the special session, which had envisaged a reduction in infant mortality. He stressed that Iraqi children continued to suffer from disease and were totally without hope; there was no way that they could be persuaded to have confidence in United Nations programmes and place their future in the very hands of those who were starving them. He denounced the violence against Iraqi and Palestinian children and condemned all sanctions imposed on the children of Iraq and other nations.

59. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Senegal) said that, five months after the special session of the General Assembly on children, it was important to bear in mind the principles and strategic objectives on which consensus had been built, and ensure that the solemn commitments were upheld. Although admittedly Governments were primarily responsible for implementing the Plan of Action adopted at the session, it was equally important that there should be regional and international cooperation. It was also necessary to mobilize additional resources and make rational use of existing resources, since it was not so much lack of political will as inadequacy of resources that undermined the success of child-protection programmes.

60. Senegal attached high priority to the development of the young child and the role of the family and parents. It also focused on infant mortality reduction, widespread vaccination programmes, salt iodization, promotion of breastfeeding and nutrition education for mothers, an area in which considerable progress had been made. It was also taking steps to combat the problem of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other contagious diseases, to facilitate the care of vulnerable children — including street children, disabled children and child misfits — and to eliminate child begging, sexual and commercial trafficking and exploitation of children as well as child labour, in accordance with the relevant ILO conventions. It was also active in promoting basic education, in particular girls' enrolment.

61. In collaboration with UNICEF, its national partners, the media and non-governmental organizations, inter alia, the Government sought to ensure that the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were respected; it welcomed the entry into force of the two Optional Protocols, which it had pledged to ratify shortly.

62. Senegal noted with satisfaction the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, who had succeeded in raising international awareness of the issue.

63. It was important to combat the socio-economic factors that encouraged children to enrol in paramilitary groups, as well as the impunity often enjoyed by perpetrators of crimes against children; in that connection, he welcomed the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

64. Lastly, he stressed the importance of ensuring regular monitoring of commitments made in respect of children and noted in that connection that an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) special summit on the issue would be held in Dakar, in November 2002, to consider the situation of children in the West African Region with a view to taking appropriate measures.

65. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) said that the Government of El Salvador attached special importance to the implementation and follow-up of commitments made at the World Summit for Children and the recent special session on children, especially in relation to the promotion and protection of their rights. In that connection, it had just become a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. In cooperation with various national partners, it was also studying the possibility of adopting a children's and youth code which would compile all the principles enshrined in the various legal instruments to which El Salvador was party, facilitate their application and fill certain lacunae. Existing legislation on children and adolescents currently came under family law; as regards criminal matters, despite some progress, it had not yet been possible to cover all their rights or to make the whole of society aware of the issue. The Government believed that the existing legal framework must be strengthened with a view to defining individual accountability and establishing mechanisms for invoking such accountability.

66. El Salvador noted with concern the worsening situation of the world's children, in particular in developing countries. In that connection, it reaffirmed its desire to join with the various national and international agencies in defending children's rights. At the national level, El Salvador focused on achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children. The National Family Bureau, in particular, actively promoted various programmes and projects designed to respond better to the main needs of young people, by giving them a greater opportunity to participate in the country's social development. The reform process under way in the Salvadorian Institute for the Protection of Minors had also been strengthened with legal and institutional tools enabling it to delegate responsibility for certain tasks to civil society and non-governmental organizations, and to play a more significant strategic role.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.